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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

**SB 217 (File 480, as amended by Senate "A")\***

### ***AN ACT CONCERNING EXCUSED ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN OF SERVICE MEMBERS.***

#### **SUMMARY:**

This bill requires any child age five to 18 enrolled in a public or private school to be granted 10 days of excused absence in any school year if his or her parent or legal guardian is an active-duty U.S. armed forces member who (1) has been called for, (2) is on leave from, or (3) has immediately returned from deployment in a combat zone or combat support posting. It also allows local or regional boards of education to grant additional excused absences for such visits.

Although the bill specifies that it applies to private school students, existing law, unchanged by the bill, provides that state laws on excused and unexcused absences do not apply to private school students. Thus, it appears the bill would not apply to private school students.

Under the bill, the student and parent or legal guardian are responsible for (1) getting assignments from the student's teacher before leaving and (2) ensuring the assignments are completed before the student returns to school.

\*Senate Amendment "A" (1) amends the active-duty service member definition to (a) include reservists and National Guard members performing their federal duties and (b) exclude the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Public Health Services, (2) specifies to which students the bill applies, and (3) makes technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

#### **BACKGROUND**

### ***Armed Forces***

By law, the “armed forces” means the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Air Force and any reserve component of these branches, including the Connecticut National Guard performing duty under Title 32 of federal law (CGS § 27-103).

### ***Unexcused and Excused Absences***

By law, students are allowed up to three unexcused absences in a month or up to nine unexcused absences in a school year before they are considered truants.

According to the State Board of Education’s definitions of excused and unexcused absences, an absence is considered excused if:

1. for absences one through nine, the student provides written documentation (i.e., a signed note from parent or guardian) of the reason for the absence submitted within 10 school days after returning to school and
2. for the 10<sup>th</sup> and any additional absences, the student provides the same written documentation giving one of the following reasons for the absence: (a) the student’s illness (with appropriate verification from a medical professional), (b) observance of a religious holiday, (c) death in the family or other emergency beyond the family’s control, (d) mandated court appearance, (e) lack of transportation that the district normally provides, or (f) extraordinary educational opportunity pre-approved by the district in accordance with SDE guidance.

An absence is considered unexcused unless it meets one of the definitions of an excused absence or is a disciplinary absence. All other absences are unexcused.

### **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Veterans’ Affairs Committee

Joint Favorable Change of Reference  
Yea    14        Nay    0        (03/11/2014)

Education Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea     32     Nay   0     (03/24/2014)